

## Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 IO-11 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 ORM-02 /090 W

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P R 291700Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3747

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MADRID

USUN NY 608

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0224

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, AG, MO, SS

SUBJ: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY SECRETARY GENERAL ON SAHARA

REF: ALGIERS 218

1. I WAS CONVOKED JAN 29 TO MEET WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY SECRETARY GENERAL BENHABYLES ON SAHARA. OTHER REPRESENTATIVES OF PERMANENT MEMBERS UN SECURITY COUNCIL HAD SIMILAR INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS; I FOLLOWED SOVIET AND PRECEDED FRENCH. ABERKANE, CHIEF OF MINISTRY'S NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN DIVISION, AND ADJALI, DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN MINISTRY, ALSO PRESENT. ATMOSPHERE CORDIAL AND PRESENTATION PRO FORMA.

2. BENHABYLES, STRESSING HE SPEAKING ON BOUMEDIENE INSTRUCTIONS, GAVE GENERAL, HISTORICAL AND FAMILIAR REVIEW OF ALGERIAN VIEW OF SAHARA SITUATION, STRESSING FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. ALGERIAN CONVOY ATTACKED BY MOROCCANS IN SAHARA WAS BRINGING FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES TO SAHRAOUI REFUGEES AT REQUEST POLISARIO, REPRESENTATIVE OF SAHRAOUI PEOPLE; IT WAS NATURALLY ACCOMPANIED BY  
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ARMED ESCORT GIVEN TENSE SITUATION IN REGION;

B. ALGERIANS REGARD MOROCCAN PRESENCE IN SAHARA AS VIOLATION OF UN PRINCIPLES AND RESOLUTIONS AND THEREFORE TOTALLY ILLEGITIMATE; THEY DISMISS ABSOLUTELY MOROCCANS' CLAIM THAT IT THEIR TERRITORY;  
C. ALGERIANS ABOVE ALL WISH TO AVOID MAGHREB WAR;  
D. ALGERIANS SEE NO OTHER SOLUTION TO SAHARA PROBLEM THAN ABSOLUTE RESPECT FOR PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION BY REFERENDUM.  
E. THEREFORE ALL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD DO WHAT THEY COULD TO ENSURE APPLICATION OF UN PRINCIPLES AND RESOLUTIONS IN SAHARA, AND IN PARTICULAR COOPERATE WITH UN SECRETARY GENERAL IN HIS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THIS.

3. I ASKED IF ALGERIANS ENVISAGED CALLING ON SECURITY COUNCIL OR TAKING STEPS IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORA; BENHABYLES SAID NO.

4. I RETURNED SEVERAL TIMES TO TEST IDEA OF APPLYING PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH MEANS OTHER THAN REFERENDUM. BENHABYLES ABSOLUTELY FIRM; FREE AND GENUINE REFERENDUM ONLY WAY. COMMENT: BRITISH AMBASSADOR SAYS HE RECEIVED LESS CATEGORICAL NO TO SAME QUESTION.)

5. I STATED THAT WE HAD HEARD NUMEROUS REPORTS OF PRESENCE OF CUBANS AND VIETNAMESE WITH POLISARIO IN SAHARA; COULD HE COMMENT ON THESE REPORTS? HE RESPONDED THAT PROPAGATION SUCH REPORTS PART OF MOROCCAN AND SPANISH PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO PROTRAY SAHARA AS ANGOLA AND TO INTRODUCE IDEOLOGICAL ELEMENT INTO CONFLICT. AT THIS POINT ABERKANE INTERVENED TO SAY IT "ABSOLUTELY FALSE" THAT POLISARIO HAD SUCH ADVISERS. ABERKANE EXPLAINED THAT FOR ITS OWN PROPAGANDA PURPOSES POLISARIO REGARDED IT IN ITS INTEREST TO CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS BUT THAT POLISARIO REALIZED THAT AFFAIR SHOULD BE KEPT PURELY A SAHARA ONE.

6. I ASKED WHAT ROLE US EMBASSY WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE IN PASSING ON BOUMEDIENE'S MESSAGE TO CHIEFS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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STATE (REFTEL). BENHABYLES RESPONDED THAT MESSAGE WAS BEING PASSED BY ALGERIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. I TOOK OCCASION TO NOTE CONTINUING ABSENCE OF ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR IN US AND SUGGESTED THAT IF ALGERIANS WISHED TO HAVE MAXIMUM-EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION OF ALGERIAN VIEWS IN US, THEY SHOULD NAME AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON SOONEST. BENHABYLES, ADJALI AND ABERKANE ALL SIGHED, AND ABEFKANE

REPLIED THAT THEY REALIZED THIS AND HAD MADE SAME RECOMMENDATION NUMEROUS TIMES TO BOUTEFILKA. UNFORTUNATELY, HE SAID, REGIME USING ITS FEW TOP QUALIFIED MEN ON CONTINUING CRISES AND PROBLEM WAS TO SPRING ONE LOOSE. THEY, LIKE US, AWAITING LONG-ANTICIPATED GOVERNMENT SHAKEUP WHICH WOULD PROVIDE INDIVIDUALS TO FILL FIFTEEN CURRENTLY UNFILLED AMBASSADORIAL SLOTS OVERSEAS.

7. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH ABERKANE BEFORE MEETING WITH BENHABYLES, ABERKANE STATED THAT DANGER OF CURRENT SITUATION IN MAGHREB HAS NOW BEEN BROUGHT HOME TO OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. EVEN THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH PREVIOUSLY SUPPORTED MOROCCO, SUCH AS TUNISIA AND EGYPT, HE SAID, WERE PULLING BACK FROM THIS SUPPORT AND SEEKING PLAY GENUINE NEUTRAL ROLE.

8. BRITISH AMBASSADOR REPORTS HE ASKED BENHABYLES IF ALGERIANS INTENDED TO CONTINUE SENDING SUCH MISSION AS THAT SENT TO AMGALA; BENHABYLES GAVE HIM FIRM YES.

9. COMMENT: BRITISH AMBASSADOR AND I HAVE COMPARED NOTES AND EACH GIVEN SAME ROUTINE. WE BOTH SOMEWHAT AT LOSS AS TO WHAT ALGERIANS EXPECT FROM EXERCISE BEYOND REPETITION OF THEIR VIEWS TO HOST GOVERNMENTS. NEITHER OF US WAS QUESTIONED, THERE NO REQUEST FOR REPLY, AND SIMPLY URGING US TO COOPERATE WITH U SECRETARY GENERAL HARDLY SEEMS WORTH THE EFFORT. BRITISH AMBASSADOR SPECULATES ALGERIANS MAY HAVE ALREADY DECIDED NEXT STEP AND ARE SIMPLY GOING THROUGH NECESSARY FORMALITIES BEFORE THEY MOVE.  
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